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DRAFT REPORT

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Juichi TAKAHARA (Japan)

PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 2000-2001 (ITEM 4 (b))

Section 26. Public information

1. At its 31st meeting, on 23 June 1999, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered section 26, Public information, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (A/54/6 (sect. 26)).

2. The representative of the Secretary-General introduced the budget section and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of the budget section.

Discussion

3. Importance was attached to the public information activities of the Organization. It was emphasized that public information activities were an integral part of the strategic management of the Organization and the dissemination of information on the work of the United Nations throughout the world was considered extremely important. It was underscored that a well-coordinated information strategy was required in order to achieve a wider and effective outreach.

4. The view was expressed that the programme narrative could be better harmonized with the text of the medium-term plan. Views were also expressed that the important role played by the United Nations information centres should have been better reflected in the description of the programme of work.

5. While the inclusion of the expected accomplishments and the efforts being made in that respect were welcomed, views were expressed that they were broad and vague and required refinement and clarity. Views were also expressed that expected accomplishments should be formulated in such a manner that their fulfilment would be measurable. The view was also expressed that tne formulation of expected accomplishments might not be feasible for some of the activities implemented by the Department. The importance of clearly identifying end-users was stressed. The view was also expressed that self-evaluation was an important tool and that such evaluations should be carried out in accordance with the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, which require self-evaluation and identification of activities which are inefficient, ineffective or irrelevant.

6. The Committee noted with concern the modest increase in the level of resources, bearing in mind the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on evaluation (E/AC.51/1999/4) on the inability of the Department of Public Information to implement all mandated activities because of the lack of resources. It was also noted that the resources under the section might not be enough to fully implement the programme during the biennium.

6 (bis). Concern was also expressed on the decrease in resources for the United Nations information centres.

7. Emphasis was given to the importance of the public information activities in the field and views were expressed in support of the strengthening of the role of the information centres. It was also stressed that the integration exercise should be undertaken on a case-by-case basis, without affecting the important role of the information centres and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 52/220 of 22 December 1997. In this context, it was noted with concern that some mandates and activities of the information centres had not been implemented. The view was expressed that the integration of information centres with regional offices of other United Nations programmes should be further promoted.

7 (bis). It was noted with concern that resources allocated for information activities related to special conferences under paragraph 26.140 did not include the Fourth United Nations Conference to Review All Aspects of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices. The view was expressed that resources for that activity should be allocated under this section.

7 (ter). Concern was also expressed that the new structure indicated for the Department was not clearly justified in relation to specific mandates.

8. The success of the United Nations Web site was noted. While the increased use of advanced electronic communication, including the Internet, was welcomed and supported, views were expressed that, given the level of technological development in developing countries, emphasis should continue to be given to the traditional forms of mass media, including radio, television and print media, in order to reach a wider audience in the developing countries. It was noted that, despite the fast development of electronic communication technology, this form

of communication was not accessible to a major portion of the world population, particularly in developing countries.

9. Concern was expressed that some of the promotional material and publications were produced only in a few official languages and views were expressed that such publications should be produced in the six official languages and widely disseminated. The view was expressed that the number of languages of radio programmes should be expanded. Concern was also expressed about the discontinuation of some useful publications, such as Everyone's United Nations, and about the delay in bringing the UN Yearbook up to date.

10. Support was expressed for closer cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the general public, as well as with the media.

10 (bis). Concern was expressed concerning the effectiveness of producing near verbatim summaries of meetings as press releases.

10 (ter). The view was expressed that the activities carried out by the Office of External Relations under section 1 might duplicate or overlap the activities and functions already carried out by the Department of Public Information.

10 (quater). The view was expressed that references to the conclusions and recommendations in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit, as outlined in table 26.28, should be deleted.

Conclusions and recommendations

11. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly approve the programme narrative of section 26, Public information, subject to the modification in paragraph 26.4 where the words "all Member States" should be replaced by "the peoples of the world".

12. In line with the designation of the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, by General Assembly resolution 53/22 of 4 November 1998, the Committee welcomed the efforts of the Department of Public Information to strengthen its capacity to disseminate information on and to draw international attention to the dialogue among civilizations with a view to promoting mutual understanding, tolerance, peaceful coexistence and international cooperation.